



CHAPTER 3

VISUAL LITERACY



We are a visually illiterate society. ... Three R's are no longer enough. Our world is changing fast—faster than we can keep up with our historical modes of thinking and communicating. Visual literacy—the ability to both read and write visual information; the ability to learn visually; to think and solve problems in the visual domain—will, as the information revolution evolves, become a requirement for success in business and in life.

—Dave Gray, founder of visual thinking company XPLANE

Visual Literacy = Reading Pictures

Visual literacy has been defined as the “ability to understand, interpret and evaluate visual messages” (Bristor & Drake, 1994). According to Wikipedia (2011), “Visual literacy is based on the idea that pictures can be ‘read’ and that meaning can be communicated through a process of reading.”

In 1935, photographer Dorothea Lange, while working for the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, snapped a picture of a migrant farm worker and her starving children at a farm in California where the workers were picking peas. Lange was one of a number of photographers who were hired to document conditions of people during the Great Depression. Little did she know that the photo of Florence Owens, known as “Migrant Mother,” and the accompanying news coverage would cause the government to rush food aid to the starving workers.

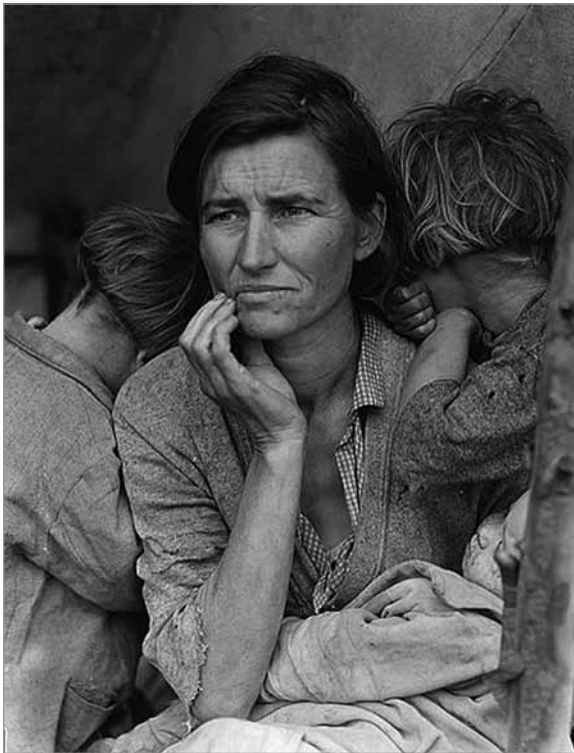


FIGURE 3.1 “Migrant Mother” by Dorothea Lange.

You can read about all of the images Lange took that day at www.loc.gov/rr/print/list/128_migm.html and at www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/migrantmother.htm. A good deconstruction/analysis of the “Migrant Mother” photograph can be found at http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/lessons/grade-6-8/Migrant_Workers.aspx.

In 1945, when America was still involved in WWII, Ansel Adams photographed Mount Williamson, part of the Sierra Nevada Mountain range in California (Figure 3.2). It is a beautiful image: clouds sit atop the mountain range, and the sun’s rays find their way through the clouds, past the mountain to the ground below. In the foreground, large rocks can be seen. It’s a nicely balanced photo and represents one of the best landscape photos ever taken. But, might something else be going on here? Media literacy asks us to consider what is outside the frame; what do we not know?

Unless you have studied Adams and his images, you would not have known that this vista was the view for the Japanese-Americans who were detained during World War II in an internment camp located at Manzanar, California. The internees were

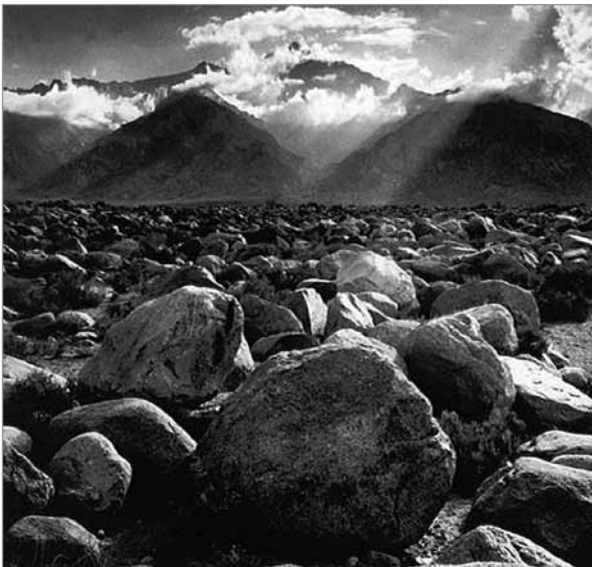


FIGURE 3.2 Ansel Adams’ photograph of Mount Williamson. Copyright held by the Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust.

allowed outside only to collect smaller rocks for their gardens. Now that you know this, does it change the way you understand or feel about the photograph?

For further discussion of this photo, check out Ansel Adams and Japanese Internment Camp Photos (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/anseladams>). Some other photos worthy of discussion can be found at 35 Powerful Photos That Tell a Story (www.noupe.com/photography/35-powerful-photos-that-each-tells-a-story.html).

The first 10 minutes of the 2008 animated feature film *WALL-E* contain no dialogue. There are no words to describe the action; the audience has to interpret what is happening simply by watching and listening to the action on the screen. The action: we meet WALL-E, the garbage-collecting robot whose sole job is to clean up Earth after it has been abandoned by all humans. See a PowerPoint presentation (www.rickinstrell.co.uk/TeachingWalle.ppt) for more information on how *WALL-E* communicates to its audience.

Visual literacy is something that has been primarily confined to our arts classrooms; in the arts, students learn how to look at a painting and how to read, analyze, and deconstruct the techniques used by the artist. Usually they study and become aware of concepts such as lighting, color, composition, and more. Today, the need for visual literacy has spread to other disciplines. Because so much information is communicated visually, it is more important than ever that our students learn what it means to be visually literate. Those who create visual images (such as photographs) do so with a purpose in mind, using certain techniques. In order to “read” or analyze an image, the audience (our students) must be able to understand the purpose and recognize the techniques. Just like media literacy, visual literacy is about analyzing and creating messages. Images can be used to influence and persuade, so it is incumbent upon educators to learn how to teach with and about images and to help our students understand the language of photography.

Whether they are images in a text or a picture book, news photos in the morning’s newspaper, or a digitally altered photo of a fashion model on the cover of a magazine—images are a major part of our world. Most of us now take lots of pictures because our mobile phones include embedded cameras. A recent Pew survey found that 83% of American teens take pictures with their cell phones (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, & Purcell, 2010). More students are into photography because of its accessibility. The size and affordability of smaller cameras makes incorporating images into instruction easier than ever. There are also a host of photo-sharing websites where we can upload and share our images with others.

Standards for Visual Literacy

McREL Language Arts Viewing Standards

The Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning Corporation offers a well-respected set of standards and benchmarks for K–12 education (Kendall, 2011). McREL's extensive Language Arts standards and benchmarks (www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks) include the following:

Standard 9. Uses viewing skills and strategies to interpret visual media

Level I (Grades K–2)

1. Understands the main idea or message in visual media (e.g., graphics, animation, comic books, television)

Level III (Grades 6–8)

6. Understands how symbols, images, sound, and other conventions are used in visual media (e.g., time lapse in films; set elements that identify a particular time period or culture; short cuts used to construct meaning, such as the scream of brakes and a thud to imply a car crash; sound and image used together; the use of close-ups to convey drama or intimacy; the use of long camera shots to establish setting; sequences or groups of images that emphasize specific meaning, differences between visual and print media)

Level IV (Grades 9–12)

7. Understands how images and sound convey messages in visual media (e.g., special effects, camera angles, symbols, color, line, texture, shape, headlines, photographs, reaction shots, sequencing of images, sound effects, music, dialogue, narrative, lighting)

Source: Selected standards reprinted by permission of McREL from *Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K–12 Education*.

Continued

Standards for Visual Literacy *(Continued)*

NCTE/IRA Standards for the English Language Arts

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE/IRA) clearly acknowledges the importance of teaching students to be visually literate. The organization's preface to its standards (www.ncte.org/standards) states:

Being literate ... means being active, critical, and creative users not only of print and spoken language but also of the visual language of film and television, commercial and political advertising, photography, and more. Teaching students how to interpret and create visual texts ... is another essential component of the English language arts curriculum. (NCTE/IRA, 1996, p. 5)

Other Relevant Standards

National Standards for Arts Education

www.educationworld.com/standards/national/arts

The Common Core State Standards Initiative

www.corestandards.org/the-standards/english-language-arts-standards

The Kennedy Center's ArtsEdge

<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/standards.aspx>

Understanding How Photographs Communicate

Here are a few of the techniques and strategies by which a photo conveys meaning:

Angle: The vantage point or direction from which the artist photographs the subject.

Framing: By deciding where the edges of the image will be, the photograph determines what you will (and will not) see—whether the subject will fill the frame and appear “close up” or will be seen at a distance as part of a larger context.

Light: Light is one of the most powerful tools of the photographer. The manipulation of light and dark and the sharpness of contrast between light and dark contribute to the mood a photograph conveys.

Focus: The clarity or blurriness of the image. The range between the nearest and farthest things that appear in clear focus defines the photograph’s depth of field.

Composition: What is in the foreground? Are the elements arranged in any particular pattern? Do you see any geometric shapes? Are the lines of the photograph straight or curving, thick or thin? Do any visual elements repeat? Is the visual weight of the photograph balanced: on each side? top to bottom? diagonally? (Adapted from Susan Schekel, personal communication, Stony Brook University)

Using Photographs in the Classroom

For many years, I have been a fan of the news photo awards given annually by *Editor & Publisher* magazine. Each year, newspapers and magazines are recognized for excellence in photography. Categories include hard news, soft news (feature), sports, and more. You can search previous years’ winners at www.editorandpublisher.com.

When working with groups of students, I recommend printing out and distributing a different photo to each group. Because they will not likely have had any prior experience analyzing photos, they will need some guidance. I have found the simple Photo Analysis Worksheet (Worksheet 3.1) developed by the National Archives to be particularly useful.

Photo Analysis Worksheet

Step 1. Observation

- A. Study the photograph for two minutes. Form an overall impression of the photograph and then examine individual items. Next, divide the photo into quadrants and study each section to see what new details become visible.
- B. Use the chart below to list people, objects, and activities in the photograph.

People	Objects	Activities

Step 2. Inference

Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might infer from this photograph.

Step 3. Questions

- A. What questions does this photograph raise in your mind?
- B. Where could you find answers to them?

WORKSHEET 3.1 Analysis Worksheet: Photograph.

Source: www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/photo.html also in PDF format: www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/

Getting Started

Before using the photo analysis handout, it might be helpful to ask the question: What do you see? Students, working in groups, should create a list. I suggest images be used without accompanying captions. (One idea is to cover the photo caption with a piece of construction paper, so that the caption can be read at a later time.) Captions draw students' attention away from the photo, even though they do provide the context. But that is not the goal here. We want students simply to gather information solely from the image itself. When they don't have any context, they are required to look deeply at the photo—and through this process, they will see details they would not have seen otherwise.

After the teacher gives them time to study their photos, representatives of each group should be called on to explain what they observed. (It may be helpful for students to stand in front of the class and hold up their group's photo or for a teacher to project it in the front of the room so that the entire class can see it). After each group has shared its findings, a student should lift the cover from the caption below its photo, and read it aloud. This completes the activity, allowing students to understand the context of the photo.

A host of websites now provide teachers with many options for locating and using photos with students. Here are a few:

Resources for Photos

Daily News Photos

<http://news.yahoo.com>

In the “News Search” toolbar on the left, click first on the magnifying glass icon and select the “news photos” option from the drop-down menu. Then enter words that describe what you're searching for to produce a host of images.

The National Archives

www.archives.gov/research/start/by-format.html#photos

LIFE Magazine Archives

<http://images.google.com/hosted/life>

EduPic Graphical Resource

www.edupic.net

Smithsonian Photography Initiative

<http://photography.si.edu>

Picturing Modern America 1880–1920

<http://cct2.edc.org/PMA/>

Read Write Web

www.readwriteweb.com/archives/digital_image_resources_on_the_deep_web.php

Pictures of the Year International

www.poyi.org/65/winners.html

Pulitzer Prize Winning Photographs

www.pulitzer.org/bycat

Framing

Imagine holding a camera and looking through its viewfinder. You might move the camera, or yourself, in order to improve the composition of the picture inside your viewfinder, and thus your final picture. You are deciding what to include and what to leave out. This is called *framing*. When many of us look at a photograph, we usually don't ask the critical-thinking question: What is outside the frame? But we should. Consider the baby photo examples Debbie Abilock presents on pages 109 and 110 of her NoodleTools “Visual Literacy” handout (see Figures 3.3a and 3.3b; www.noodletools.com/debbie/literacies/visual/diglitnews.pdf).

Check out the news photography framing exercise “How Framing Affects Our Understanding” at www.frankwbaker.com/framing.htm.



FIGURE 3.3a It looks like the baby is reading the newspaper. Its hand is holding the corner of the page, perhaps ready to turn the page, but let's consider what we don't see.



FIGURE 3.3b Now we see the baby is actually sitting on someone's lap. Seeing what's "outside the frame" changes the viewer's understanding.

Visual Literacy Inquiry

Graphic designer Erin Riesland (2005) suggests that students who are learning to incorporate visual literacy into their thinking consider the following questions:

- What am I looking at?
- What does this image mean to me?
- What is the relationship between the image and the displayed text message?
- How is this message effective? (Riesland, 2005, para. 10)

Manipulation of Images

Pick up a magazine aimed at women and, even though it's hard to tell, most likely the cover has been retouched or digitally altered. The use of software programs to change photographic images has become so commonplace that many of us don't realize or recognize it. *Newsweek* magazine has an online gallery worthy of student attention. "Unattainable Beauty," which can be found at www.newsweek.com/feature/2010/unattainable-beauty.html, takes a look at a decade's worth of what it

says are bad digital photo alterations and provides background on how the original images were changed.

Another take on this topic that is appropriate for young women is from Sweden. It invites students to discover how magazine covers are manipulated (<http://demo.fb.se/e/girlpower/retouch>).

Activity

Students can be encouraged to take sides on this issue. Should photographs of models or actors be digitally altered? Have your students conduct their own research. What rights do famous people give up when their photos are used on magazine covers? Do you think retouched images should be labeled with a symbol?

We think of the manipulation of images as a contemporary issue, especially with the advent of Photoshop and other photo-altering software. But the truth is that images have been manipulated since photography was first invented. Examples of this can be seen by going to the website gajitz.com and searching for the article “Before Photoshop: 7 Photo Edits That Literally Made History” (<http://gajitz.com/before-photoshop-7-photo-edits-that-literally-made-history>).

I’ve created a lesson plan, “Critically Viewing Photographs,” designed to get students thinking about a famous photograph taken after the Battle of Gettysburg. The lesson plan can be found at www.frankwbaker.com/civilwarlessonplan.htm.

Kate Doesn’t Like Photoshop

In 2003, actress Kate Winslet made news not for a movie she made but for her comments about how she was portrayed on a magazine cover. The British edition of *Gentleman’s Quarterly* magazine featured Winslet, whose legs had been significantly trimmed and tummy flattened. She protested, “The retouching is excessive. I do not look like that and more importantly I don’t desire to look like that.” In 2005, she objected to photo retouching in a movie poster (Schewe, 2005).

Using New Media Tools With Visual Literacy

A variety of new media tools are now available that allow you and your students to add text within the body of a photograph or image. For example, in my lesson plan about the Civil War photo (www.frankwbaker.com/civilwarlessonplan.htm), I posted a number of questions that can be used as prompts for student discussion. Using user-friendly applications such as Bubble Snaps (www.bubblesnaps.com) or Flickr Notes (as in the example shown at www.flickr.com/photos/caterina/31244/), such questions or comments could be posted inside the photo itself.

Is Seeing Believing?

In 2002, I received an email with the subject line “*National Geographic* 2002 Photo of the Year.” Upon opening the email, I was presented with a color photo of what appeared to be a shark coming out of the water about to attack a man coming down the ladder of a helicopter hovering over the water. Wow, I thought, this is impressive, and I forwarded the email to friends.



FIGURE 3.4 A well-done hoax circulated through email.

Source: Unknown.

When I first received the email, I admit, my critical faculties were dropped. It was certainly possible, I reasoned, that *National Geographic*, with photographers literally all over the world, captured this photo of a man about to be attacked by a shark.

Unfortunately, this “photo” does not represent what really happened: it is a digital manipulation. Shortly after the viral email made the rounds, the *National Geographic* website debunked the doctored image (Danielson & Braun, 2005). In

explaining the hoax photo, they describe the original two images that were morphed to create the final image.

Students could use the critical-thinking questions and apply them to this image. *Who created the image?* Because it was a viral email, it had no traceable author. All photographers want credit for their work, so when a photo has no caption or author, we should be wary. *What is the purpose of the image?* It is clear that the author/creator hoped readers would forward it, without question, which many of us did. *Who is the audience for this message?* Anyone who reads email. *What techniques were used to create it?* The author/creator located real images online, used some kind of photo-editing software, and wrote an email that sounded authentic. To check if an email or image is an “urban legend,” use the Snopes.com website (www.snopes.com), which researches and reports whether a message is true or false. The Internet shark attack hoax is debunked at www.snopes.com/photos/animals/shark.asp.

Visual Literacy and News Content (News Literacy)

Kate Bringham’s thesis, “Decoding Visual News Content” (2002; <http://katebringham.com/thesis/forMIT/Interface.htm>) is a valuable resource designed to educate news consumers about the design of news graphics on television and layout in news magazines. The intention of the activities on the site, according to the author, “is to introduce people to some methods for looking more critically at visual news content.” She uses the news media coverage about the September 11, 2001, attacks in New York to explore issues. By clicking on Television Stills (for example), you can change the background image or colors. Readers can also explore reasons behind certain image uses, text, visual features, and concepts, as well as explanations of the medium used and the sources of the images.

Visual Literacy in the Political Arena

The next time you see President Obama’s photo in the news, remember this: Everything about that image likely will have been carefully thought out ahead of time. Not many people know that the White House has a Communications Department, composed of television and advertising experts, whose sole job it is to make the president look his best in tomorrow’s news.



FIGURE 3.5 Indiana Town Hall meeting, February 9, 2009.

Source: White House Photo Blog, www.whitehouse.gov/blog_post/indiana

Yes, a stage will have been built, and a lot of thought goes into what is behind the chief executive. In other words, framing: what the camera sees. The photographers will all be told where to stand to get the “best shot,” which is what you will see in the evening news, the morning newspaper, and the weekly news magazine. Image is more important than words; our brains will retain the impressions more than what is said, so image control is paramount. From Abraham Lincoln to Barack Obama, the people in office or running for office have been concerned about their image.

Their aides fret over the question: What do we want the public and the media to see? Their campaign aides and consultants try to control how the media convey the politician’s image in the press. “Photo ops” (short for photo opportunities) abound: specific events and times when news photographers can capture the candidates doing anything, from kissing babies to eating lunch. All candidates are interested in how they are represented. Candidates, for example, may wear a coat and tie in order to communicate a serious business or formal message. Or they may dress down, as John Edwards did, wearing blue jeans and no tie for much of his 2008 poverty tour. Or they might wear the color red, as Hillary Clinton did, perhaps to communicate patriotism. Or they may be seated aboard a tank, as Democratic presidential nominee Michael Dukakis did, trying to communicate his strength on America’s defense. President G. W. Bush wanted to send a message of a strong leader when he appeared on an aircraft carrier to declare “Mission Accomplished” in Iraq.

Questioning Photographs

How we interpret photographs depends on a number of factors. For example, have you had any photography training that would help you understand framing, composition, depth of field, focus, backlighting, and the like? Have you been exposed to any visual literacy education designed to help you read photographic images? Assuming the answer is no, then you would not necessarily have the skills needed to read the language of photographic images. Professional photographers and photo-journalists, who have had training, understand how to use the tools of their trade. They also know how to communicate a message to the audience using those tools. Today, those tools include the ability to capture an event, digitally alter an image, and transmit it thousands of miles in a few minutes. But that wasn't always the case.



FIGURE 3.6 Democratic presidential hopeful Senator Robert Kennedy walking alongside his wife, Ethel, on a beach in Astoria, Oregon. The photo was taken May 28, 1968, just a few days before the Oregon primary.

Source: Photo courtesy of John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Burton Berinsky.

When thinking about the image of the Kennedys (see Figure 3.6) and what it might represent, we might say that it could be representative of a romantic moment: two people sharing some quiet time, relaxing and alone. The fog in the distance also lends to the mood. We might speculate as to the weather, because the Senator has his hands in his pockets; his wife is wearing a coat. She has taken her shoes off in order to walk in the sand. There appear to be tire tracks in the sand, indicative of a car or some other vehicle having driven there.

How did the photographer know they would be on the beach at that time? Did the Kennedy campaign issue a press release notifying the media that the candidate would be available for a photo op? What was the campaign hoping this image would communicate to voters?

The important thing to remember here is that the Kennedys were not alone. There was a photographer who took this picture; he was situated behind them. His framing of this shot, or the cropping of it, is such that we are not allowed to see what might

be to the left or right of the Kennedys. We should ask: what is outside the photographer's viewfinder? What are we not allowed to see and why?

Notice the number of people who can be seen in the wider shot (Figure 3.7). How do you feel about the first photograph, now that you've seen the second one? Does this change your impression or your understanding of this staged event? We might ask, who are those people surrounding the candidate and his wife?



FIGURE 3.7 A subsequent image of Robert and Ethel Kennedy taken by the same photographer a short time later.

Source: Photo courtesy of John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Burton Berinsky.

Contemporary Use of Images for Political Purposes

In the winter of 2010, President Barack Obama was on a campaign to win support of his health care legislation. One event at the White House was covered by the news media, and photographs of it were published in newspapers, magazines, blogs, and other news-related web pages.



FIGURE 3.8 U.S. President Barack Obama speaking about his health care proposals.

Source: Associated Press photo by Susan Walsh, October 5, 2009.

The photo shows the president speaking from a podium, flanked by people wearing white coats. Thinking about visual literacy, we might ask students to consider the following questions: Who are the people surrounding the president? Did you say doctors? If so, how do you know? If they are doctors, did they arrive at the White House wearing these coats? Is it possible that the White House distributed the coats

to them? Why would it be necessary or desirable for the President to be photographed with “doctors” in white coats? What might this image communicate to news consumers?

For more material on how politicians use images, visit The People’s Choice: Digital Imagery and the Art of Persuasion (Burns & Martinez, 2002), at <http://web.archive.org/web/20040105032819/www.southcentralrtec.org/alt/files/people%27schoice/17+Art+of+Persuasion.pdf>. This professional development module (with lesson plans and resources) teaches about visual literacy with a focus on past presidential campaigns’ visual messages.

Reading a Magazine Cover

Magazine covers are like advertisements. The graphic designers put the most controversial content on the cover in order to capture our attention and get us to purchase it. Students should be encouraged to read a cover.

The editors and designers of the *Rolling Stone* example shown in Figure 3.9 placed a caricature of President Bush on the cover of an issue when he was the chief executive. In order to read this cover, you must be able to interpret some of what is portrayed. For example, would students know that Bush is

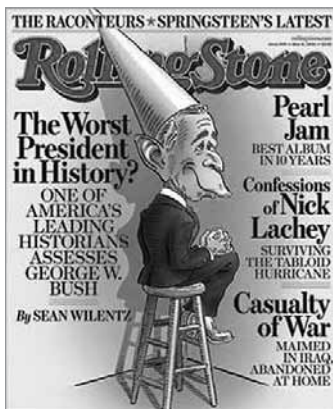


FIGURE 3.9 The May 4, 2006, *Rolling Stone* cover.

Art: Robert Grossman

wearing a “dunce cap”? Would they know the meaning of it? Would they also understand what it means to be “sitting in the corner of the room”? Ask students to “read” or decipher the expression on the face of the president. What might it mean or convey? Because many teachers also teach bias, what might we have our students infer from the *Rolling Stone* editors’ use of the caricature, combined with the words “The Worst President in History”?



FIGURE 3.10 The December 8, 2008, cover of the *New Yorker* magazine.

Examine the cover of the *New Yorker* magazine shown in Figure 3.10. In order to read/understand this cover, you must know what was happening in the news during this time. For context, Senator Barrack Obama had just been elected President of the United States in November. It would also be necessary to understand that all incoming presidents must interview and select key members of their staff. What else was in the news? Senator Obama’s two daughters were promised they would get a new dog when they moved into the White House.

Using the above background information, what might you infer is happening on the magazine cover?

Magazine Covers as Symbolic Representations

Those who design the covers of magazines also communicate to readers using symbolism. Take a look at the magazine covers shown in Figure 3.11. Ask students to deconstruct these covers and explain their symbolism. What are the graphic designers and editors trying to communicate?



FIGURE 3.11 Magazine covers for students to deconstruct.

Activities

Check out the magazine deconstruction activity from the Center for Media Literacy at http://web.archive.org/web/20041024154540/http://www.medialit.org/pdf/CML_DeconstructionMags.pdf). There you will find two magazine covers of former California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to compare and contrast. Another good example for comparing and contrasting are the two magazine covers (see Figure 3.12) featuring NBA athlete LeBron James.

Have students consider these questions:

- Who are the audiences for each magazine?
- What are the clues?
- What are one or two adjectives that could describe how LeBron looks on each cover?



FIGURE 3.12 LeBron James on two magazine covers.

Magazine covers are also ads. What techniques are used to sell magazines to their readers? Notice LeBron's facial expressions: what do they say to you? If you could read only one of these publications (*Sports Illustrated* or *GQ*), which would it be, and why? In other words, which is more appealing? If you were to re-design each cover, what would you change, and why?

Sample Magazine Cover Deconstruction

In the following example, students would have to understand certain terms, such as “masthead” (the title of a newspaper or periodical as it appears across the first page), to comprehend this analysis. Explanations of this magazine cover, from the United Kingdom, are posted on the Magforum website (www.magforum.com/cover_secrets.htm) and under Gender/Magazine Covers and Cover Lines at www.katpad.co.uk/media08/page6.html.

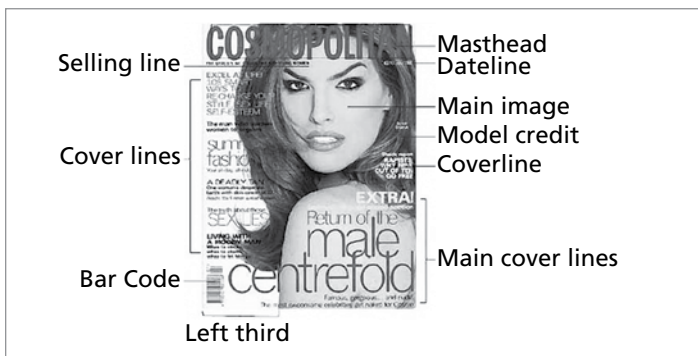


FIGURE 3.13 The secrets of magazine cover design (www.magforum.com/cover_secrets.htm).

Have students bring in a favorite magazine. Introduce them to some of the elements of “informational texts,” for example: layout, cover line, vanishing line, selling line, heading/subhead, sidebar, and balance.

Direct them to create an analysis or deconstruction of their magazine covers (refer to Worksheet 3.2).

Informational Text Questions Worksheet

(Note: Not all of the questions would apply to every text.)

1. Who is the author of this text, and who is the publisher?
2. What is the purpose of the text? What does the author/publisher hope to gain by creating it?
3. Does the text indicate any bias or propaganda techniques? If so, identify them.
4. Which text features stand out?
5. Could the text be described as a primary or secondary source?
6. Who is the intended audience; what does the creator hope the audience will do?
7. What is appealing in the text?
8. How are headlines, colors, and font styles and sizes used?
9. Could this text have been presented in a different form? If so, what form?
10. Create a few words or phrases that describe this text.

WORKSHEET 3.2 Informational Text Questions Worksheet.

Source: www.frankwbaker.com

Students could post their productions on a class blog or via sites such as SlideShare.net. Students analyzing the same magazine or perhaps the same cover subject on different magazines might also compare and contrast their analyses.

See how a student created his own magazine cover at <http://georgiamedia.wordpress.com/2010/02/22/productio-log-220210>. Have your students create their own magazine covers. Just Google the phrase “create a magazine cover,” and you will find a number of websites that will allow your students to produce their own covers. They might also prefer to create a parody of a magazine cover.

See Figure 3.14 for an example of a “fake” *National Geographic* magazine cover created by the *Harvard Lampoon*. Have students compare this fake cover with an authentic *National Geographic* cover. What text and visual features are alike; which ones are different? In what ways might Paris Hilton be a “wild animal”?

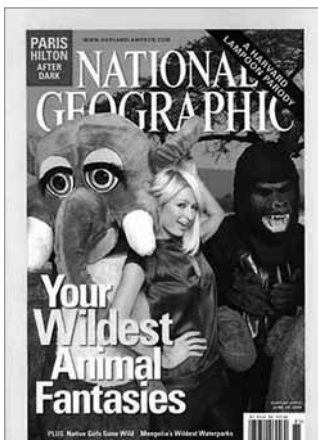


FIGURE 3.14 The mock *National Geographic* cover of the *Harvard Lampoon*, which appeared April 1, 2008 (http://msnbcmedia.msn.com/j/msnbc/Components/Photo_StoryLevel/080401/080401-harvard-lampoon-vmed-8a.widec.jpg).

Bogus Websites: Manipulating Images and Words

As students conduct research and look for information online, they will invariably come across something that appears to be authentic but, upon closer examination, analysis, and questioning, they'll discover that someone is out to fool them. They'll find that someone has used specific techniques to make a website, photo, or magazine cover look real—but it is not real.

One example is an ad that ran in a Philadelphia newspaper for the new airliner, “Derrie-Air,” which proudly announced that customers could book a seat based solely on their weight. They even created a website, <http://flyderrie-air.com> (see Figure 3.15), which newspaper readers clicked on. Here is what the website looks like: A big practical joke, it seems. The airline does not exist, but many unsuspecting news consumers were taken in by this parody.



FIGURE 3.15 A fake website for a fake airline.



FIGURE 3.16 An advertisement for the made-up drug HAVIDOL.

Another fake ad was done by Australian artist Justine Cooper for a new prescription drug, HAVIDOL (see Figure 3.16). If you're not visually or media literate, you may not think twice about this new drug. Yet this, too, is a parody. Check out the HAVIDOL website, <http://havidol.com>.

Like the airline ad, the HAVIDOL ad uses certain codes and conventions that we take for granted. Have students consider what made these ads appear to be authentic. What are the clues? For example, every ad touts the product's name and slogan. Have your students identify those. Ask students to consider in what ways these ads resemble the real (airline and prescription drug) ads they are based on.

Read More About It

Read more about the Derrie-Air ad hoax here: www.citytv.com/toronto/citynews/life/money/article/2419--phony-airline-website-comes-too-close-to-reality.

Read more about the background of the fake HAVIDOL ad at www.reuters.com/article/idUSL165119520070216.

Editorial Cartoons in the Social Studies Classroom

One of the best ways to engage students in visual and news literacy is by incorporating editorial cartoons in the classroom. Because editorial cartoons are traditionally found in newspapers and magazines, they are easily accessible. With Internet access, teachers and students can locate cartoons from every newspaper in the U.S., as well as those from all over the world. A number of good cartoon indexes exist, including those in the following list. Note that both Daryl Cagle websites (www.cagle.com and www.cagle.com/teacher) have worksheets, lesson plans, editorial cartoons, and more.

Resources for Cartoon Indexes

Daryl Cagle's Professional Cartoonists Index

www.cagle.com and www.cagle.com/teacher

The Association of American Editorial Cartoonists

<http://editorialcartoonists.com>

GoComics

www.gocomics.com/explore/editorials

Daryl Cagle's Political Cartoons

www.politicalcartoons.com

Cartoon Stock

www.cartoonstock.com/newscartoons/newscartoon.asp

Questioning Cartoons

Daryl Cagle (Taylor, 2011, para. 6) suggests students use the following five questions to analyze cartoons.

1. What is the event or issue that inspired the cartoon?
2. Are there any real people in the cartoon? Who is portrayed in the cartoon?

3. Are there symbols in the cartoon? What are they and what do they represent?
4. What is the cartoonist's opinion about the topic portrayed in the cartoon?
5. Do you agree or disagree with the cartoonist's opinion? Why? (www.nelrc.org/changeagent/cartoons.htm)

Cartoon Analysis

The National Archives has produced the Cartoon Analysis Worksheet (Worksheet 3.3) to help teachers and students.

The Graphic Novel

Some of the most popular texts in libraries today are graphic novels. Many media specialists report that students can't get enough of these new "comic books." Graphic novels offer many of our students a new avenue to reading by combining words and images in a format that is appealing, attractive, and fun. Reading a graphic novel may seem like a waste of time to some; in reality, as Allyson Lyga (2006) points out, graphic novels offer another way to teach students literacy:

To read a graphic novel, much less a wordless one, many essential literacy skills are required, including the ability to understand a sequence of events, interpret characters' nonverbal gestures, discern the story's plot, and make inferences. (Lyga, 2006, para. 4)

I have been fascinated not only by the traditional graphic novels based on classic literature, but also by newer trends in nonfiction graphic novels. For example, *The 9-11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation*, illustrated by Sid Jacobson and Ernie Colon (2006), was endorsed by the official 9-11 Commission, and *08: A Graphic Diary of the Campaign Trail*, by Michael Crowley and Dan Goldman, follows both Senators John McCain and Barack Obama on the road to the White House.

Cartoon Analysis Worksheet

Level 1

Visuals	Words (not all cartoons include words)
List the objects or people you see in the cartoon.	Identify the cartoon caption and/or title. Locate three words or phrases used by the cartoonist to identify objects or people within the cartoon. Record any important dates or numbers that appear in the cartoon.

Level 2

Visuals	Words
Which of the objects on your list are symbols? What do you think each symbol means?	Which words or phrases in the cartoon appear to be the most significant? Why do you think so? List adjectives that describe the emotions portrayed in the cartoon.

Level 3

Describe the action taking place in the cartoon.

Explain how the words in the cartoon clarify the symbols.

Explain the message of the cartoon.

What special interest groups would agree/disagree with the cartoon's message?

Why?

WORKSHEET 3.3 Analysis Worksheet: Cartoon.

Source: www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/cartoon.html also in PDF format:
www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/

There is even a graphic novel about media literacy. *Media Meltdown: A Graphic Guide Adventure*, written by Liam O'Donnell and illustrated by Mike Deas, is one of the first graphic novels to address media literacy. It's an engaging story of what happens when young people get involved in their community, try to tell a story, and learn about how the media works along the way. You can read more about this book at the Orca website (<http://us.orcabook.com/productdetails.cfm?PC=2304>). This book even has its own dedicated website (www.mediameltdown.net).

There are a growing number of graphic novel resources on the Internet. Some, such as Comic Life (<http://plasq.com/comiclfe>), Comiqs (<http://comiqs.com/aboutus>), Pixton (<http://pixton.com>), and BitStrips (www.bitstrips.com), offer opportunities for your students to create their own comics or graphic novels.

Other websites offer tips and training for teachers looking to integrate graphic novels into their instruction. The Teaching Resources Center of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has posted "Getting Started with Graphic Novels: A Selective Bibliography of Professional Resources for Librarians" (www.uncg.edu/soe/trc/docs/GraphicNovelsPro_getting%20_started.pdf), which is a great starting place for librarians and teachers. Drawing Words Writing Pictures (<http://dw-wp.com/teaching-resources/>) is another excellent teacher site. You'll also want to check out all the titles in Will Eisner's instructional series, including: *Comics and Sequential Art: Principles and Practices from the Legendary Cartoonist*; *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative*; and *Expressive Anatomy for Comics and Narrative: Principles and Practices from the Legendary Cartoonist*.

Visual Literacy Resources

Websites

Visual Literacy: Media Literacy Clearinghouse

www.frankwbaker.com/vis_lit.htm

Visual Information Literacy: Reading a Documentary Photograph, by Debbie Abilock

<http://aasl.metapress.com/content/n58l04h238135346/fulltext.pdf>

21st Century Literacies, links

www.noodletools.com/debbie/literacies/

Books

Teaching Visual Literacy in the Primary Classroom Tim Stafford

Stafford, T. (Routledge, 2010)

Picture This: Photography Activities for Early Childhood Learning (2nd ed.)

Entz, S. (Corwin, 2009)

Engaging the Eye Generation: Visual Literacy Strategies for the K–5 Classroom

Riddle, J. (Stenhouse, 2009)

Visual Impact, Visual Teaching: Using Images to Strengthen Learning (2nd ed.)

Gangwer, T. (Corwin, 2009)

Teaching Visual Literacy: Using Comic Books, Graphic Novels, Anime, Cartoons, and More to Develop Comprehension and Thinking Skills

Frey, N., & Fisher, D. (Corwin, 2008)

How to Read a Photograph: Lessons from Master Photographers

Jeffrey, I. (Abrams Books, 2009)